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War Of Wits—

Never-Ending Work Of CIA Guards America's Very Life

(Last of a Series)

By LADISLAS FARAGO

The weird assortment of people in Gen. William J. 'Wild Bill' Donovan's office had come to Washington on a very strange summons, that fall day in 1942.

Each had received an invitation that was clearly a thinly veiled order. Each had brought his own peculiar talent.

There were professional spies and college professors, business tycoons and grocery clerks, scientists and attorneys, New England aristocrats and strong-arm men.

They entered a tightly guarded conference room at 9 a.m. By noon they composed the first staff of America's Office of Strategic Services, variously known as OSS and O77.

OSS served well during World War II. After the war it perished, not because peace had ended its usefulness—but because a strained peace and the lessons of war indicated a different and a larger intelligence service.

In 1947, America got its super-intelligence service via the National Security Act, which created the hush-hush Central Intelligence Agency. It is so secret that few persons in the country know how many agents, typists—or even filing cabinets it has.

30,000 Agents?

CIA's boss, tall, husky Allen W. Dulles, is directly responsible to the National Security Council, which is headed by the President and includes the Vice President, secretaries of state and defense, defense mobilizer and foreign aid chief, plus other experts the President may summon to special sessions.

CIA's business is intelligence. Its Washington office controls, directs, plans for a vast network of agents flung to every corner of the world. These agents, trained for fast action day and night, include some of America's most skilled and talented men and women.

How many? Published guesses run as high as 30,000 agents—about the strength of an infantry division—and Mr. Dulles chooses not to comment on the accuracy of this figure.

But it's safe to say that every skill known to man is represented in the CIA roster of operatives. At any time, a tense world situation may arise calling for unique abilities and expertly directed initiative. CIA is ready for any such situation and—most important—it's ready to anticipate them.

Briefly, here's how CIA works as our overseas "burglar alarm," our first line of defense against enemies and potential enemies.

Information Is Graded

Special agents dispatched from Washington obtain information from informants or from "residents," agents permanently stationed in a particular foreign locale. They wire, cable, fly or ship it rapidly to Washington, where it's analyzed for reliability and accuracy. The grading system used takes into account the reliability of the source and the "probability" of the intelligence.

Information from a very reliable source is graded "A"; that from an untested or inaccurate source is graded "D." Probability grades run from 1 to 4. However, even though I have handled many top-secret pieces of intelligence and documents pertaining to espionage, I have seen very few pieces grade A-1. The healthy tendency of America's intelligence services to take nothing at face value makes B-2—and even as low as C-3—a report calling for careful consideration and follow-up.

The information is then considered as a single piece of a huge jigsaw puzzle picture of a particular situation. Trained analysts piece the information with other intelligence on hand to come up with an "intelligence estimate," or picture of an existing situation.

Such estimates often involve much prediction, as military, political and economic leaders who use CIA's information are usually interested in what future actions will probably result from a particular known fact.

These intelligence estimates are then distributed to the persons who need them and can act on them. The CIA is not a policy-making organization, and therefore does not decide what actions should be taken on the information it gathers. It gives opinions on a situation above and beyond its intelligence report only if the Government agency involved requests it. Such requests must be made through the National Security Council.

There are other things that CIA does not do: It doesn't share the FBI's responsibility for domestic security and counter-intelligence. It doesn't duplicate the foreign intelligence work of the State, Treasury and Defense Departments, various military intelligence agencies, and the Atomic Energy Commission. These groups, however, pass their data to CIA for analysis inclusion in "the whole picture" and transmittal to executive departments.

A less dramatic facet of CIA's activities has little to do with special agents on hazardous foreign missions. This facet is research and "collection." Experts in CIA's Washington office constantly examine foreign newspapers and magazines, monitor broadcasts, probe scientific journals, economic data, diplomatic documents . . . and piece together vital information from seemingly unrelated scraps of fact.

And CIA has still another big job. It's the co-ordinating agency for all United States intelligence services. The Office of Naval Intelligence may come up with facts that form half of a much-needed intelligence estimate. The other pieces of information may have been culled by the Atomic

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Energy Commission or even by Treasury agents working abroad.

CIA puts the picture together and fires the information to the Government branch that requires the information. This way, our leaders get all the facts as they relate to one another.

Speed is vital to CIA's operation. A minimum of time passes between the moment an agent picks up raw data to the hour a finished intelligence estimate and prediction is delivered to the policy makers. Vital information can change into worthless fact in hours. CIA's work must be both fast and critically accurate.

Examples of CIA's usefulness to the nation are found in their action in regard to the Berlin Blockade in 1948 and the death of Josef Stalin in 1953.

Right Again

By the Potsdam Treaty, the United States, Britain and France hold sections of Berlin, which is deep in the Russian zone of Germany. When Russia blocked rail and road passage of people and supplies into West Berlin, CIA gave an intelligence estimate that Russia wouldn't go to war if the West broke the blockade by air. Acting on this information, United States leaders instituted the famous Berlin Airlift and—as CIA predicted the Soviets did not fight.

When Stalin died, our Government needed to know: Would the USSR fly apart? Would rebellion break out? Would Stalin's "heirs" make war as a means of keeping the people under control? Again, the CIA said "No." Again, the CIA was right.

Did CIA agents foment the overthrow of Guatemala's totalitarian regime in 1954? How did CIA predict the shift in Soviet power long before Malenkov was ousted in 1955? Only the President and the National Security Council and Allen Dulles know the answers — and they're not saying.

American leaders — long believers in espionage as a weapon of war—are coming to realize its prime importance as an instrument of peace. In "Secret Missions," a book on which I collaborated with former deputy head of ONI, Admr. E. M. Zacharias, (USN, ret.), it is said: "A highly effective intelligence organization is an inescapable necessity as a preventative of war. Intelligence anticipates conflict. Only intelligence makes possible a workable, fruitful diplomacy to prevent conflict—the vital function of diplomacy. We must now build and sharpen our intelligence organization as an implement of peace . . ."

Your Central Intelligence Agency is at work in every country of the globe serving as America's sensitive nerve-ends abroad. The CIA's job is to warn us of trouble before it happens. It is at work guarding your freedom right now—and it may save your life tomorrow.

(The author, Mr. Farago, is technical adviser for the TV series, The Man Called X, now appearing each Wednesday night on WMCT, The Commercial Appeal television station. His book, "War of Wits," was published by Funk & Wagnalls Co.)